THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The fire incidents, which have occurred at Ordnance Depots, have been investigated. Probable causes of fire in the Ordnance Depots, on analysis of past cases, are as under:-

(i) Fires due to spontaneous combustion.

(ii) Electrical Short-circuit.

(iii) Accidental explosions during testing/repair/breakdown of ammunition. However, human element had not been ruled out.

(b) and (c) Annual Technical Inspections of depots is carried out on yearly basis. Last inspections were conducted during 2001. In addition, local inspections under the aegis of Formation Commander/Depot Commandants are conducted as per schedule. Regarding research centres, Centre for Environment & Explosive Safety (CEES) undertakes annual visit to the research centres maintained by Defence Researach Development Organisation (DRDO), Directorate General of Ordnance Factory (DGOF), Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and points out the measures to improve safety.

(d) During inspection it is ensured that prescribed safety norms are being followed and implemented by the laboratories/establishments. The inspecting officers have reported about deficiency of equipment and manpower in depots on which necessary action has been taken. The implementation of the report in respect of the research centres is ensured through periodical reports.

Engagement of Sanitary staff on private contract basis

2111. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Secunderabad Cantonment Board is engaging sanitary staff on private contract basis;

(b) if so, whether this system is working efficiently to serve a large section of civilian population; and

(c) if not, whether Government propose to give any direction to the cantonment Board to replace this private contract system by permanent sanitary staff?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Underground drainage in Secunderabad Cantonment

2112. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to release special grants to Secunderabad Cantonment Board to introduce Underground Sewerage System and to streamline storm water through drainage system;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether Government has granted the financial and administrative sanction of expanding and remodelling of more than a century old culverts in Secunderabad Cantonment specially at Lakshminagar, Picket and other places as proposed by Defence authorities of Secunderabad Cantonment;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) by when the work is likely to commence; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (g) Secunderabad Cantonment Board is self-sufficient and is in a position to undertake development activities from its own resources. The Cantonment Board has approved its participation in the integrated scheme of underground drainage through 'Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board'. The Board's share in the Scheme is about Rs. 12 lakhs that can be met from its own resources.

The storm water drain is also being constructed/repaired by the Cantonment Board out of its annual budget in phased manner.

The Cantonment Board has widened the culverts of Bolton road and reconstructed the old culverts at Viman Nagar. The proposal for reconstruction of culverts at Lakshminagar and picket out of its own funds has been taken up by the Cantonment Board.